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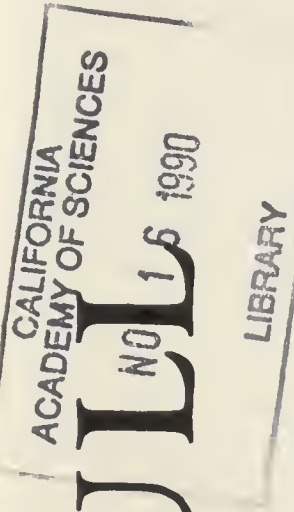
March 1990

Number 3

Volume 72

Berkeley, California

Golden Gate Audubon Society



THE GULL

LIBRARY

THE BLACK RAIL APPEARS AS THE WETLANDS SERIES EBBS

Notwithstanding the meager 5.2 foot high tide, the Black Rail will appear on Thursday, March 8, 1990 at our meeting in San Francisco. Most birders feel privileged to catch a fleeting glimpse of this secretive marshland dweller. So I'm ecstatic to announce an entire program devoted to the Black Rail presented by Jules Evans.

Evans has been conducting field research for Point Reyes Bird Observatory on this diminutive bird. His talk will review the results of breeding and winter season surveys of Central California's tidal marshes, and discuss threats to remnant populations of this rail.

The fragmentation and destruction of marshlands in California have reduced the size of the populations of marsh dependent bird species like the California Black Rail, which is now patchily distributed in the northern reaches of San Francisco Bay. "Despite its historic losses and current predicament the official status of the California Black Rail does not ensure its full protection under the law," according to Evans. This population is listed as "threatened" by the California Dept. of Fish and Game, and is a candidate species for

(continued on page 34)

BURROWING OWLS NEED HELP

Those of us who enjoy watching Burrowing Owls have noticed that many Alameda County locations where we once saw this bird have been developed or changed. The losses are numerous and there is fear that without some attention Burrowing Owl numbers will become so low as to threaten their population in this county where they were once almost common along the South bay's coastal grasslands and pastures. Because this species does not have endangered or threatened status with the wildlife agencies it is difficult to get any protection for this bird. Last summer and autumn I became aware of five locations in Alameda County where owls were displaced or inadvertently killed by filling or grading properties with owl habitat, some with nests. There were possibly

(continued on page 34)

**CHRISTMAS COUNT 1989 RESULTS
IN THIS ISSUE ON PAGE 44**



BURROWING OWL *(continued)*

others lost without documentation. The Burrowing Owl is protected from being killed by the Migratory Bird Act, but because it nests and takes refuge in burrows underground, the evidence of any crime is quite literally buried as grading takes place.

The first prerequisite for protecting a species is to quantify its population and losses. We need to identify the historical and remaining locations that had and have Burrowing Owls in Alameda County. GGAS, with the help of Ohlone Audubon, is in the process of preparing a map with this information in an effort to monitor losses and to alert wildlife agencies to those properties in this county where this small predator lives. The information will be especially important when proposed projects come up for review in areas where the owl resides. Habitat changes

can be denied during the nesting season. Mitigation may be requested if it can be shown that there is a need. Results from this study will appear in *The GULL* in the future.

YOU CAN HELP. If you have ever seen a Burrowing Owl in Alameda County, please write a note to us relating the precise location, date (season and year, if the date is not known), and number of Burrowing Owls observed. Give your name, address and phone number. Please take a minute out of your busy schedule, and help us to make this record complete. Help us maintain the opportunity to observe Burrowing Owls in Alameda County. Write to me at 1330 Eighth Street., Alameda, CA 94501 or phone (415) 522-8525.

—LEORA FEENEY

BLACK RAIL *(continued)*

for listing by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Evans hopes that his research will give the bird more protection.

We hope that this program attracts at least as many rail-watchers as flock to Palo Alto Baylands Nature Center during the spring high tide! Remember, a sighting is guaranteed and refreshments will be served. The nourishment and the program begin at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 8 at the Josephine Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, in San Francisco. (See page 51 for directions and for a new map.) What an appropriate grand finale to our series of programs on San Francisco Bay wetlands and wildlife.

—JOELLE BUFFA
Program Chairman

BALD EAGLE NOTE

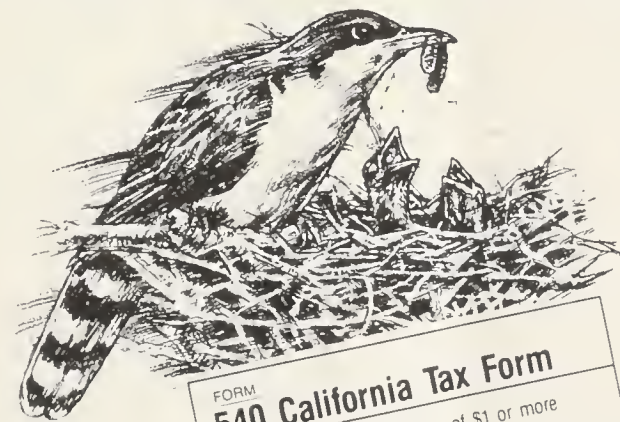
Plans to introduce a population of Bald Eagles from British Columbia to the Point Reyes Peninsula have been tabled for the time being because of concerns raised by various environmental organizations. Early Christmas Bird Count reports indicate Bald Eagles were observed in Sonoma, Alameda and San Mateo Counties. Maybe we'll be lucky enough to see them extend their range to Point Reyes naturally.

MANY THANKS

Many thanks to our hardy band of Seed Sale volunteers, Darrell Hall, Helen Green, Russ Wilson, Millie Bennett, Steve Margolin and Nicola Selph in the East Bay and Tom White with Rosilyn Bazurto in San Francisco. We couldn't do it without your dedication—and wheelbarrows.

GGAS would also like to thank our office volunteers, Mary Swift, Neal Whitehorse, and Pat Gannon for all their hours making things run.

We can use our Tax Returns to help Endangered Species.



It's 100% deductible!

FORM 540 California Tax Form

You may make a contribution of \$1 or more

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47	Olympics	• 47
48	Vietnam Veterans	• 48

Fill in any amount you want!

USE LINE 45! California has more than 260 native animal and plant species that are fighting for survival. We urge you to help them win that fight with a tax-deductable contribution on LINE 45 of your State Tax Return. Please help if you can. Even a little contribution helps a lot!

Pictured here: **Yellow-Billed Cuckoo** (one of 260 native California species at risk!)

FIELD TRIPS CALENDAR

Sunday, March 4—Monterey Bay Pelagic Trip. See *The GULL* for January (page 12) for details.

Saturday/Sunday, March 10/11—Honey Lake.

Sunday, March 11—Tennessee Cove.

Wednesday, March 14—Mini-trip to Mitchell Canyon.

For details on the above trips see *The GULL* for February.

Saturday, March 17—San Francisco Bird Blitz. In past years participants have reported over 100 species within the City limits. This year's mad dash to beat all previous records will begin at 7 a.m. sharp at the foot of Van Ness Ave. From there we will caravan to other sites including Golden Gate Park, Sutro Baths, Lake Merced and Candlestick Point. Bring lunch and liquids. We will bird until dusk, then adjourn to a nearby restaurant where, for a minimal cost, we can avoid going home to cook dinner. Leader: Alan Hopkins (664-0983).

Saturday, March 17—Richardson Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Audubon Center at the Sanctuary, 376 Greenwood Rd. in Tiburon. From Hwy. 101 take the Belvedere/Tiburon exit; go east and turn right at the third traffic light, Greenwood Cove Rd., then an immediate left.

There should be several thousand birds on the water. We may be able to see courting Western Grebes. Bring lunch and a scope if you have one. In the morning we will have a shoreline walk and slideshow on waterfowl. After lunch we will look for birds from about 1:00 to 2:30. The Lyford House will be open for touring after our walk. Leader: Merle Sundove (388-2524). (✓)

Sunday, March 18—Sunol Regional Park. Meet at 8:30 a.m. inside the park

entrance at the parking lot on the left. Take I-680 south, turn off at Calaveras Rd. (the freeway sign is marked: Calaveras Rd., Dumbarton Bridge, Calif. 84). Go south (left) and follow the signs to Sunol Regional Park, about five miles. Bring lunch and liquids. (Park regulations prohibit alcoholic beverages.) We should see Golden Eagles, a variety of winter residents and early spring migrants. This trip is also good for wildflowers. Leader: Peter Allen (892-8063) \$ (✓)

Saturday, March 24—A double feature in a half day: Birding in Golden Gate Park with Alan Hopkins plus a tour of the Ornithology Dept. of the Academy of Sciences with Dr. Luis Baptista. Meet at 8 a.m. at the back entrance to the Academy of Sciences on Middle Drive East for a brief walk in the park looking for resident birds and early migrants. We will return to the Academy at 11 a.m. for a tour of the Ornithology Dept. Due to limited space only 12 participants can be accommodated. **Reservations are required before March 16.** Call the GGAS office (843-2222).

Saturday, March 31—Bodega Bay. Meet at 9 a.m. at the intersection of Hwy. 1 and East Shore Rd. (one-half mile north of Dickmann's Bay Store). We will bird for spring migrants in Bodega harbor, Bodega Head, and possibly Salmon Creek. Bring a bag lunch and liquids.

If you arrive Friday, lodging is available at the Best Western Motel (707/875-3525) and the Inn at the Tides (800/541-7788). There are nice campsites at the Dune's State Park just north of our meeting place, but plan to get there early to be sure of getting a spot, or call Ticketron to reserve one. Leader: Nancy Conzett (707/875-2231) Bodega Bay.



Saturday, April 7—Beginners' trip to Bothe-Napa Valley State Park. Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot. This is a particularly beautiful park in the spring, with migrating warblers and vireos, Winter Wrens and, if we're lucky—Pileated Woodpeckers. We will walk about four to five miles and bird mostly by ear. This trip is especially good for beginners.

From the East Bay drive north on I-80 beyond Vallejo and take the Napa exit. Follow Hwy. 29 to St. Helena. The entrance to the park is on the left just past the Ole Bale Mill north of St. Helena. From the West Bay take Hwy. 101 north to Hwy. 37 near Novato; go east to the junction with Hwy. 121; turn left and continue on 12 until it joins Hwy. 29 near Napa, then continue north on 29 to the park.

Bring lunch and liquids. Rain cancels trip. Please carpool if possible. Leader: Gene Hull (525-6893). \$(✓)

Wednesday, April 11—Mini-trip to Sunol Regional Park. meet at 9 a.m. at the Ranger Station parking lot inside the park. Take Hwy. 680 south to about eight miles beyond the intersection of Hwy. 580. Turn off at Calaveras Rd.; go left and follow the signs to Sunol Regional Park. We may see Lark Sparrows, Golden Eagles, and Northern Orioles plus resident birds of the area. Bring lunch. Rain cancels trip. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (351-9301) and Jean-Marie Spoelman. \$ (✓)

Trips marked with \$ go to parks and other sites that require an entrance fee.

Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked (✓).

Problems: If you need a ride or can take a passenger, or if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, call Russ Wilson, Field Trips Committee Chmn. (524-2399).

—FIELD TRIPS COMMITTEE

OBSERVATIONS

December 29 through January 30

The jet stream continued to send cold, wet weather to the north and kept California dry for much of the month. Most rarities were leftover 1989 birds, but a few new surprises from San Mateo south to Monterey kept birders alert.

Egret through Ducks

A **Reddish Egret** made its way to Moss Landing Dec. 28, feeding at Moonglow Dairy and Jetty Road at least through Jan. 23 (*fide* RJR, PJM, AWi). A late report indicated that this bird was found dead at Moss Landing Jan. 28 (*fide* JM). This dark morph immature bird provides only the second record for northern California.

A high count of two hundred Brant were at Lawson's Landing Jan. 7 (MLR). A male "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal was seen at Palo Alto Baylands Jan. 11 (CRC), perhaps the Sunnyvale Sewage Pond bird at a new location? An amazing six Tufted Ducks reached our area as follows: one male Tufted Duck at Mallard Reservoir Dec. 30 on the Mt. Diablo Christmas Bird Count (CBC), believed to be the same bird which was there last year (RJR); one male Tufted Duck at Lake Hennessey, Napa Co. Jan. 1 (JEP, BDP); a male Tufted Duck at Sutro Baths Jan. 9 through the period (KM), considered to be same bird returning from last year; an adult male Tufted at Rodeo Lagoon Jan. 10 (CLF); one described as a "subadult" found at San Pablo Reservoir at a location with no public

access Jan. 15 (DES); and a female Tufted Duck described from Arrowhead Marsh Jan. 22 (D&DH). The male **King Eider**, molting into adult plumage, remained in the vicinity of the Pt. Reyes Fish Docks through the period (mob). Bold facing does not do justice to this stunning bird. The male Harlequin Duck was still enjoying Bolinas Lagoon through the period (mob), and another male Harlequin continued to be seen off Coyote Point in San Mateo Co. at least through Jan. 18 (JL, RSTh). From one to four Oldsquaws were found at the Fish Docks during January (mob, LRF, ABtt); at Princeton Harbor one and then two Oldsquaws were present during the period (PJM, RSTh, JMR); and one Oldsquaw was found at Moss Landing Jan. 1–27 (BS, *fide* PJM, GFi, KHe).

Shorebirds

Lesser Golden-Plovers lingered in our area: up to seven at Spaletta Ranch and Plateau through the period (mob), and one off Wave Crest Road at Half Moon Bay through Jan. 27 (AKr, RKo, JMR). One Lesser Golden-Plover was found at Moss Landing on that CBC Jan. 1 (PJM), and there were six at Lawson's Landing Jan. 7 (MLR). Up to five hundred Mountain Plovers were noted north of Davis along Road 102 near Road 16 Jan. 22 (JH), with sixty near there Jan. 16 (EDG). A Solitary Sandpiper visited the north end of Pinto Lake, Santa Cruz Co., Jan. 1–6 (GWP, LES *fide* PJM, DSg). Several Rock Sandpipers continued to be found at Princeton Harbor jetty through Jan. 8 (PJM, RMrr), and one remained at Pebble Beach at least to Jan. 27 (SMo, JMR). More unusual was one at Johnson's Landing along Hayward Shoreline Jan. 28 (RJR).

Jaeger through Murre

A Parasitic Jaeger was near Moss Landing Jan. 2 (PJM). An immature Franklin's Full was at Stockton sewage

ponds Jan. 16 (DGY). A Glaucous Gull was found at the Martinez Dump Dec. 30 (RJR), and another was at Moss Landing Jan. 1 (DR, *fide* PJM). Up to two **Thick-billed Murres** were seen off Cannery Row, Monterey through Jan. 9 and one was still present through Jan. 18 (*fide* RER, DR). A **Thick-billed Murre** at Moss Landing lingered at the harbor entrance Jan. 1–26 (BS *fide* PJM, MLR, GMcC, et al.).

Landbirds

Two Short-eared Owls were found at Las Gallinas sewage ponds Jan. 27 (SMo), and another was at the Corte Madera marsh Dec. 31 (NB). The adult male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Pine Gulch Creek remained to at least Jan. 21 (MJL); and a male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, found near Nicasio Town Square Jan. 5 (HG, MTG, PDG), remained through the period (MLR, JM, et al.). A Red-breasted Sapsucker showing characteristics of the "ruber" race was observed at Indian Beach, Tomales Bay Jan. 9 (RS). The Least Flycatcher at Olema Marsh continued to be seen through Jan. 20 (RS, SEF). The identification of an *Empidonax* species at Phipps Ranch, Pescadero, Jan. 2–10 (DKe, DPM, ELb, CKf) ranged from "Western" and Pacific-Slope through Hammond's. The **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** at Pine lake Park in San Francisco remained to be well documented through Jan. 27 (JM, et al., MB, SMO, SCx). A Tropical Kingbird was found at the entrance to Moonglow Dairy near Moss Landing Jan. 2 (JPM). An American Dipper near Alpine Dam, Marin Co. Jan. 14 was probably the same bird which wintered there previously (DAH). Yes, the Bendire's Thrasher was still at Jahant Rd., Lodi through January (KGH, *fide* JM). Last year it remained through February 27. An immature Northern Shrike lurked about the fields east of the Corte Madera Village Shopping Center Dec.

31 through the period (NB, GHg, HG, JCl). An adult Northern Shrike was reported at San Luis NWR Jan. 7-11 (*fide* RER), and one was at Los Banos Wildlife Management Area Jan. 20 (DGr).

The Tennessee Warbler at Lobos Cr. in the Presidio was last noted Jan. 6 (JCl). A **Lucy's Warbler**, discovered at the Phipps Ranch Jan. 1 (RSTh), remained through the period (mob), providing San Mateo Co. with its second record. At this Ranch also were an Orange-crowned Warbler, up to two Nashville Warblers, and a Black-and-white Warbler during the period (mob). A Palm Warbler was along Pilarcitos Cr., Half Moon Bay, Jan. 6 (PJM). Other Black-and-white Warblers were the one at Pine Gulch Creek which remained at least through Jan. 26 (JM, KH, BHo), and one at Watsonville Community Hospital Jan. 6 (DSg). The adult male American Redstart at Middle Lake, Golden Gate Park, remained through the period (SMo). The tanager at Pine Lake Park, reported last month as a Western, was discovered to be a Summer Tanager, and it remained there at least through Jan. 27 (THK, EHa, GMcC, DWm). A Black-headed Grosbeak, quite rare in winter, turned up at the Phipps Ranch (where else?) Jan. 6 (MiW).

As many as four Sharp-tailed Sparrows were still being seen at Pine Gulch Cr. mouth during the period (mob), and three were banded there Jan. 24 (SNGH, SW). Also, three to four Sharp-tailed Sparrows enjoyed Palo Alto Baylands airport channel at least through Jan. 11 (THK, CRC). A Fox Sparrow, resembling the "azaboria" subspecies (a little darker and grayer than the bright eastern form, found primarily in northwestern Canada) was seen at the Phipps Ranch Jan. 28 (JM). An immature Harris' Sparrow visited a feeder in Pengrove, Sonoma Co. Jan.

22 through the period (DN). A Northern Oriole, possibly "Baltimore" type, was seen near Inverness Park Jan. 25 (SNGH).

Vagrant Obs Ed Moves On

Spring is coming and it is time for new beginnings. After four years as your Observations Editor I think you deserve a change. It has been a good four years for me. Following the seasonal happenings of the birds brought its own special rewards. And I have learned much from the process. There have been major changes in the way we gather and store data and communicate with one another now, and it has been fun to be part of the computer connection. My grateful thanks goes to **Joe Morlan**, Rare Bird Alert compiler unparalleled, whose useful comments guided me along the way, and also to Don Sanford, gracious and uncomplaining editor of *The GULL*, and to Paul Green who critically proofread at least forty of these columns. I cheerfully pass all but the proofreader along to your new Observations Editor, **Ann Dewart**. Ann is familiar to many of you as an active Bay Area birder and also as a member of the Board of GGAS. She will bring her own special flavor to the column, and I look forward to reading it.

Observers: Anthony Battiste (ABtt), Mike Baumgartner, Florence G. Bennett, Neil Blank, Josiah Clark (JCl), Clayton R. Coler, Scott Cox (SCx), Ann Dewart, Al M. Eisner, Carter L. Faust, Leora r. Feeney, George Finger (GF), Shawneen E. Finnegan, Dan Gray (DGr), Ed D. Greaves, Helen Green, Michael T. Green, Paul D. Green, David & Denise Hamilton, Keith Hansen, Ed Hase (EHa), K. Hebert (KHe), Kevin G. Hintsa, Bob Hogan (BHo), David A. Holway, Joel Hornstein, Steve N. G. Howell, George Hugenberg, Joan M. Humphrey, John Keene, Dan Keller (DKe), Clay Kempf

(CKf), Ted H. Koundakjian, Richard Kovak (RKO), Andy Kratter (AKr), Jack Law, Earl Lebow (ELb), Michael J. Lippsmeyer, Guy McCaskie (GMCC), Robert V. Merrill (RMrr), Kevin Metcalf, Peter J. Metropulos, Joseph Morlan, Scott Morrical (SMo), Daniel P. Murphy, Dan Nelson, Gary W. Page, David E. Quady, David C. Rice, Jean M. Richmond, Robert J. Richmond, Mary Louise Rosegay, Barry Saupe, Donald E. Schmoltdt, Carol Shattuck, Dan Singer (DSg), Rich Stallcup, Lynne E. Stenzel, Ron S. Thorn (RSTh), Adrian Wander, Sophie Webb, Mike Wihler (MiW), Anna Wilcox (AWi), David Wimpfheimer (DWm), David G. Yee.

Please report observations to Northern California Rare Bird Alert: 528-0288 or 524-5592.

—HELEN GREEN

Outgoing Observations Editor
2001 Yolo Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707

CONSERVATION NOTES

PERATA DISAPPOINTS ON OPEN SPACE

Last fall your many letters and calls helped to pass a fairly strong Open Space Element in the Alameda County General Plan. Supervisors Mary King, Warren Widener and Don Perata voted together to pass a somewhat weakened version of Mary King's original proposal, but nevertheless it drew an urban limit line, specified a minimum parcel size and set mitigation policies for development.

However, a basic flaw in the law allows the Board of Supervisors to change elements within the General Plan by another 3-2 majority vote. So any protection could be rather easily reversed in the future. Therefore, Supervisor King then sought to further insure Open Space protection through a charter amendment which would only allow changes in the General Plan to

occur through a vote of the Alameda County electorate. This resolution did not pass. Only two supervisors voted in favor—Mary King and Warren Widener. Supervisor Don Perata chose not to join with them on this critical vote. We had looked to Supervisor Perata for leadership in open space issues and have been disappointed.

—CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

A WETLAND TO MISSION BAY

The semi-final Plan for San Francisco's Mission Bay development project was released for public review at the end of January. As you may know, this about 300 acre project offers the City the wonderful opportunity of recreating some of the tidal marsh that once made up a large part of San Francisco.

Many of you have written Mayor Agnos asking him to put a wetland into the Mission Bay Plan. We understand that he received well over a thousand letters supporting a wetland. Despite this, the Mayor has decided that he favors active playing fields over wetlands, and the Plan presently reads: no wetlands.

Letters do seem to have had some effect. If it is our understanding that the Mayor has said that if the Planning Commission decides to reinstitute a wetland into the Plan, he will not oppose it. **So we can still change the Plan!! There is time!** The Plan will now go before the City Planning Commission.

A very good chance remains to convince the Planning Commission that wetlands areas belong in the Mission Bay Plan. **So, Please Write.**

Write the Planning Commission and ask that wetlands be put back, say that there is wide support for this wetland. For example, after a long educational process Santa Fe-Pacific Realty's Mission Bay Project Manager, Jim

Augustino, has come to realize the benefits a wetland could bring to his project and he is now supportive of the inclusion of a wetland into the Mission Bay project. Perhaps this is because in addition to the important natural resource, educational and recreational values that wetlands provide, a wetland also brings economic value to such a development.

The Mission Creek Conservancy a resource economist study these economic benefits, and reported that an 18 acre wetland could add \$29,259,000 in property values to the development because studies have shown that people will pay more for housing adjacent to wetlands. (The study allowed for a large amount of low to moderate income housing; it does not conflict with that issue). This would result in \$332,000 in increased yearly tax revenues to the City.

Please write the Commission and tell them how valuable wetlands are and tell them that the citizens of the Bay Area want a wetland in Mission Bay.

PLEASE WRITE TO:

Douglas J. Engmann, President
City Planning Commission
Department of City Planning
450 McAsslister St., 6th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102

—ARTHUR FEINSTEIN

BACK YARD BIRDER

While strolling on a bluff high above a cove near Mendocino, I paused for a peek at the beach with my new Nikon roof prism 8×20 binoculars. They're so small I'm never without them, much to my husband's dismay. The sandy beach was bathed in the setting sun but there wasn't a bird to be seen. Offshore was a small rocky islet, every inch of

which was covered with gulls engaged in sunning, preening or sleeping.

As I watched, a Ring-billed Gull (one of the few I can identify) glided to a landing at the water line and began walking purposefully toward the cliff. What the heck was he looking for? Within moments, ten, twenty, then a hundred plus gulls followed. All landed on the hard sand at water's edge before waddling after their leader. Finally I spotted the object of their quest: a small trickle of water had been released from a drain pipe and was making its way, in a small stream, toward the ocean. The sharp-eyed Ring-billed Gull had spotted it and was soon forced to share when the mob of gulls began squabbling over position to take advantage of this tiny source of fresh water.

This was a prime example of one type of flocking behavior called "following." One or several birds in a block initiate an action and are immediately imitated by the rest, usually stopping one activity to begin another.

One of the obvious benefits of flocking is that many birds are able to take advantage of food and water found by just a few. Gulls are especially opportunistic birds which ensures their survival and certainly accounts for their success as a species. Other species which tend to flock, spring to mind: blackbird species, finches, waxwings, ducks, cranes and geese. Sometime titmice, bushtits, nuthatches, kinglets, vireos and warblers form mixed flocks. They move noisily through the trees, stirring up insects as they go, feeding according to individual preference, often oblivious to the others. Seabirds of all kinds gang together to take advantage of schools of fish or waste dumped from ships. Double-crested Cormorants

and American White Pelicans actually cooperate in fish drives where they swim, herding fish towards the shallows!

There is also security in numbers. Multiple eyes and ears aid in early warnings of predators or other danger. If a flock flies in unison, it is more difficult for a hawk, e.g., to pick out

a victim. And aggressive flocks discourage predators of their nests by mobbing.

Thank goodness, birds are not hampered by such human feelings as greed, selfishness and envy or they would not share the rewards of food and water with the flock.

—MEG PAULETICH

DEADLY SHOWERS

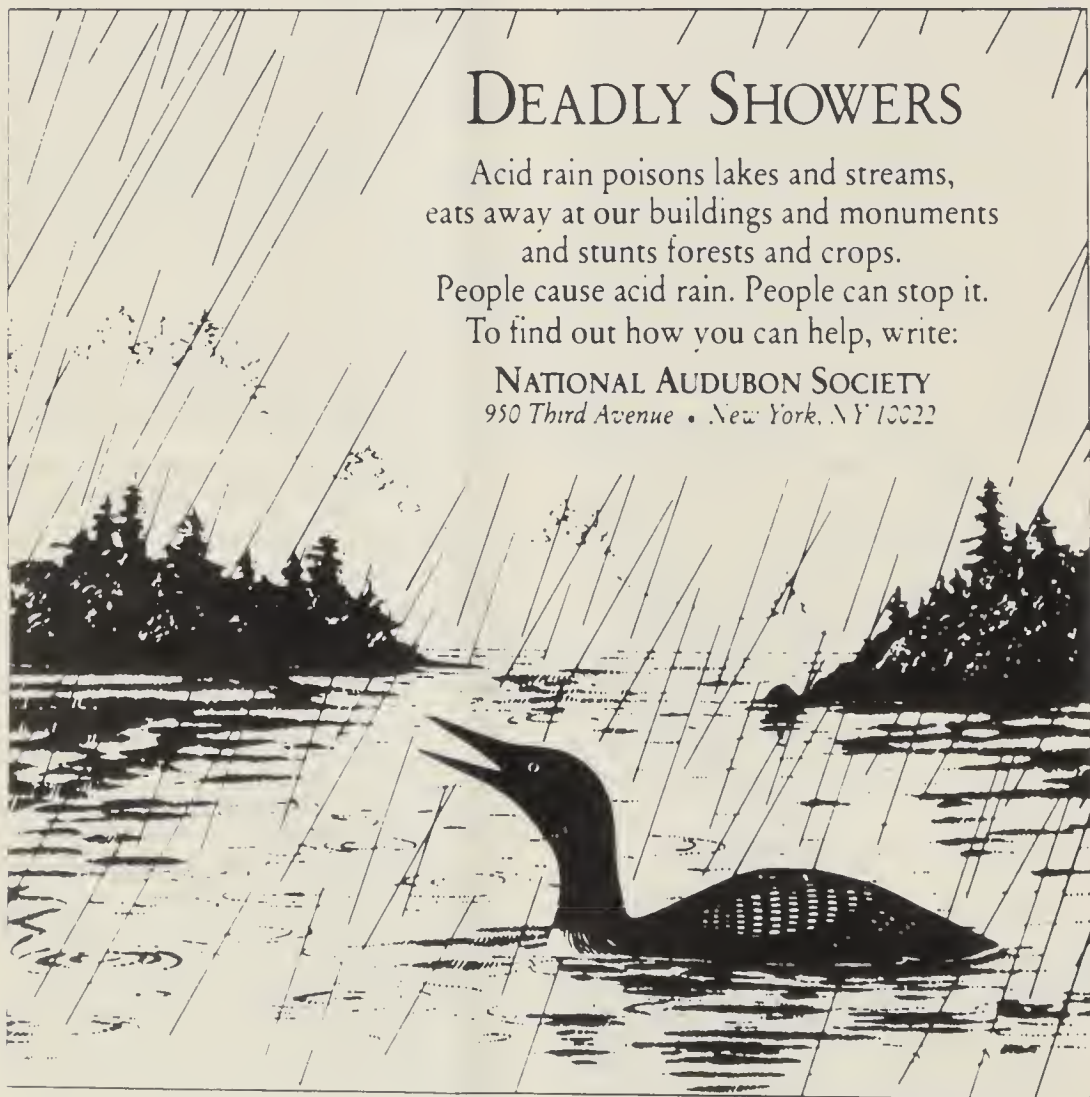
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CARRIZO PLAIN

It was only a few years ago that the chance of seeing a California Condor was the attraction that lured birders to the Carrizo Plain. A side trip to the adjacent Los Padres National Forest sometimes provided a glimpse of that huge relic of the ice ages, but in 1986 only three condors remained in the wild, and the following year, the year that the last condor was captured, the Carrizo Plain field trip was cancelled for lack of interest.

But it was recognized that the area still had a lot to offer, even without condors. It had a variety of raptors; it had birds of the open country and grasslands; it had Sandhill Cranes, and it had Eben McMillen—an octogenarian and life-long rancher of the Carrizo Plain. If he was still willing to lead a field trip, as he had done previously for many years, we felt we should take advantage of his knowledge, wisdom, and expertise. Eben assured us that if there was sufficient interest, at least twelve people, that he would be happy to lead the trip again. It was revived in 1988 and 22 participants showed up. Their glowing reports inspired others, and the following year 28 made the trip. Word soon got around, and this year the number snowballed into more than 50. Admittedly, a group that size is too big, especially for car caravaning, but no one can say he or she didn't have a good time (unless they were in the car that broke down).

Eben always had an attentive audience when he stopped to share his knowledge of the countryside where he grew up. We stood beside a fracture in the San Andreas Fault where he explained that one tectonic plate was sliding under another, causing a lateral movement on the earth's surface of about three inches per year. And he showed how the ecosystem works

where natural grasses were allowed to grow—maintaining a balance of nature, whereas across the road the land was left barren from introduced grasses and grazing. Our final stop ended with a one-half mile hike to see petroglyphs of the Chumash Indians, and even though vandalized, it was still an impressive sight, and we couldn't help but speculate as to its meaning and origin.

Although a few Sandhill Cranes had been recently seen in the area our group missed them, and was denied the spectacle of the thousands we saw last year. But we had memorable sights of Golden Eagles (one pair was nesting), Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks, Prairie Falcons, a Merlin, and a Short-eared Owl. The dry winter cut down on the number of land birds, but the more interesting observations included Horned Larks, Lark Sparrows, and Long-billed Curlews. Then there was the "mystery feather". A field trip is never complete without someone finding a feather to be identified. "This one," said Eben noting the soft downy barbs "Is obviously from an owl, probably either a great horned or a short eared." Dave Quady didn't think it had quite the right pattern for a great horned, so it was passed around for further examination.

"That feather sure looks awfully familiar," said Ed Walker, taking off his hat, and sure enough—his feather had fallen out.

At the end of the day we all went our separate ways, but it was a feather in the cap of each of us to have spent the day with Eben McMillan, a living legend of the Carrizo Plain.

—RUSS WILSON

THE CHRISTMAS COUNT REPORT — 1989

OAKLAND—Dec. 17, 1989

We had 166 field observers and 12 feederwatchers, who saw 121,738 birds of 176 species.

The number of field observers has not been this high in many years. Everyone come back next December and bring a friend!

The number of individual birds seen was within the average range for our count area over the five preceding years.

Our most unusual species was the Pileated Woodpecker seen in Redwood Regional Park (a range extension) and a Costa's Hummingbird seen near San Leandro Bay.

—DAVID RICE

SAN FRANCISCO— Dec. 28, 1989

It was a beautiful, sunny winter day and 56,088 birds were counted. This was down 5,368 from last year, but within the range of normal for our count area. The species counted increased by 14 to a record high of 175. Counters in the field were 73, but only three watched at feeders. Hey! Where were you feeder watchers this year?

This year's list of rarities was as special as any in the past. A Dusty-capped Flycatcher and a Summer Tanager in the same tree were spectacular. In addition, we counted a Broad-winged Hawk, Lesser Golden Plover, Parasitic Jaeger, a Solitary Vireo (and a second bird that may have been another), several warbler species including Tennessee, Nashville, Yellow, Hermit, Palm, American Redstart, and Wilson's, three Swamp Sparrows, and six White-throated Sparrows. Best of all, everyone seemed to have a good time.

—DAN MURPHY

In the tables below bold face type suggests unexpected species or unusually high incidence.

SPECIES	OAKLAND	S.F.
Red-Throated Loon	84	61
Pacific Loon	2	19
Common Loon	66	39
loon sp.	9	18
Plied-billed Grebe	221	47
Horned Grebe	138	17
Eared Grebe	22	4
Western Grebe	395	1095
Clark's Grebe	42	68
<i>Aechmophorus</i> , sp.	182	188
Brown Pelican	20	61
Double-crested Cormorant	3829	7761
Brandt's Cormorant	90	251
Pelagic Cormorant	5	6
American Bittern	0	1
Great Blue Heron	39	25
Great Egret	74	17
Snowy Egret	89	26
Cattle Egret	1	1
Green-backed Heron	3	5
Black-crowned Night Heron	90	58
Greater White-fronted Goose	2	1
Snow Goose	0	1
Canada Goose	1568	2
Canada Goose (small forms)	1	0
Wood Duck	7	2
Green-winged Teal	92	2
Mallard	956	616
Northern Pintail	524	6
Blue-winged Teal	4	0
Cinnamon Teal	35	3
Northern Shovler	272	20
Gadwall	91	48
Eurasian Wigeon	1	0
American Wigeon	1253	332
Canvasback	426	128
Redhead	46	49
Ring-necked Duck	234	49
Greater Scaup	3377	378
Lesser Scaup	3056	272
scaup, sp.	8679	2400
Black Scoter	0	6
Surf Scoter	11,323	1855
White-winged Scoter	38	1234
scoter, sp.	282	220
Common Goldeneye	642	67
Barrow's Goldeneye	24	0
Bufflehead	1625	419
Hooded Merganser	8	0

SPECIES	OAKLAND	S.F.	SPECIES	OAKLAND	S.F.
Common Merganser	21	0	Mew Gull	1087	2710
Red-breasted Merganser	76	13	Ring-billed Gull	2938	615
Ruddy Duck	4172	1103	California Gull	1145	830
duck, species	40	0	Herring Gull	213	36
Turkey Vulture	145	8	Thayer's Gull	2	9
Osprey	1	0	Western Gull	856	3082
Black-shouldered Kite	15	1	Western x Glaucous-winged Gull	43	10
Northern Harrier	11	8	Glaucous-winged Gull	163	560
Sharp-shinned Hawk	25	14	white-winged gull, sp.	1028	3304
Cooper's Hawk	17	7	Forster's Tern	216	96
<i>Accipiter</i> , sp.	7	4	Common Murre	0	4
Red-shouldered Hawk	4	12	Marbled Murrelet	0	2
Broad-winged Hawk	0	1	Ancient Murrelet	0	6
Red-tailed Hawk	102	90	alcid, sp.	0	8
Ferruginous Hawk	1	0	Rock Dove	1333	2754
Golden Eagle	1	0	Band-tailed Pigeon	381	118
American Kestrel	74	46	Mourning Dove	1468	752
Merlin	2	1	Common Barn Owl	1	0
Peregrine Falcon	2	5	Western Screech Owl	2	0
California Quail	271	45	Great Horned Owl	51	5
Clapper Rail	5	0	Burrowing Owl	2	0
Virginia Rail	1	15	Saw Whet Owl	6	0
Sora	0	2	White-throated Swift	12	2
American Coot	3219	615	Anna's Hummingbird	527	470
Black-bellied Plover	2120	1049	Costa's Hummingbird	1	0
Lesser Golden Plover	0	1	Belted Kingfisher	14	5
Snowy Plover	1	11	Acorn Woodpecker	75	0
Semipalmated Plover	58	20	Red-breasted Sapsucker	34	4
Killdeer	275	431	Nuttall's Woodpecker	86	0
Black Oystercatcher	1	8	Downy Woodpecker	27	25
Black-necked Stilt	93	7	Hairy Woodpecker	6	1
American Avocet	1566	311	Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker	0	1
Greater Yellowlegs	21	6	Northern (Red-shafted) Flicker	403	152
Willet	876	499	Pileated Woodpecker	1	0
Wandering Tattler	0	1	Black Phoebe	46	51
Spotted Sandpiper	14	10	Say's Phoebe	6	5
Whimbrel	17	36	Dusky-capped Flycatcher	0	1
Long-billed Curlew	97	85	Horned Lark	2	9
Marbled Godwit	1510	131	Steller's Jay	413	6
Ruddy Turnstone	14	27	Scrub Jay	891	133
Black Turnstone	62	59	American Crow	91	44
Surfbird	0	43	Common Raven	8	51
Red Knot	2	4	Chestnut-backed Chickadee	795	194
Sanderling	706	755	Plain Titmouse	116	0
Western Sandpiper	8098	1350	Bushtit	1078	473
Least Sandpiper	1351	28	Redbreasted Nuthatch	184	0
Dunlin	9818	965	White-breasted Nuthatch	12	0
peep, sp.	1147	1000	Pygmy Nuthatch	42	280
Short-billed Dowitcher	351	56	Brown Creeper	64	24
Long-billed Dowitcher	28	5	Rock Wren	2	0
dowitcher, sp.	3375	205	Bewick's Wren	202	30
Common Snipe	32	40	House Wren	5	1
Pomarine Jaeger	0	1	Winter Wren	25	18
Parsitic Jaeger	0	1	Marsh Wren	4	15
Bonaparte's Gull	20	15	Golden-crowned Kinglet	127	80
Heermann's Gull	0	3	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	970	385

SPECIES	OAKLAND	S.F.
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	0	1
Western Bluebird	149	0
Hermit Thrush	273	131
American Robin	5446	1104
Varied Thrust	219	26
Wrentit	353	84
Northern Mockingbird	79	32
California Thrasher	40	3
American Pipit	87	5
Cedar Waxwing	1386	175
Loggerhead Shrike	10	0
European Starling	3174	1192
Solitary Vireo	0	1
Hutton's Vireo	55	9
vireo, sp.	0	1
Tennessee Warbler	0	1
Orange-crowned Warbler	3	12
Nashville Warbler	0	3
Yellow Warbler	0	1
Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler	13	88
Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler	198	287
Yellow-rumped Warbler (form?)	1740	1218
Townsend's Warbler	74	148
Hermit Warbler	1	3
Palm Warbler	0	2
American Redstart	0	1
Common Yellowthroat	6	23
Wilson's Warbler	2	1
Summer Tanager	0	1
Rufous-sided Towhee	381	41
California Towhee	803	132
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	17	0
Chipping Sparrow	1	0
Lark Sparrow	1	0
Savannah Sparrow	63	31
Fox Sparrow	270	220
Song Sparrow	415	204
Lincoln's Sparrow	5	14
Swamp Sparrow	0	3
White-throated Sparrow	2	6
Golden-crowned Sparrow	1794	670
White-crowned Sparrow	1362	1105
sparrow species	30	25
Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco	0	1
Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco	1826	368
Red-winged Blackbird	503	327
Tricolored Blackbird	88	41
Western Meadowlark	302	145
Brewer's Blackbird	758	2092
Great-tailed Grackle	0	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	17	120
blackbird, sp.	9	240
Purple Finch	72	16
House Finch	1453	1042
Red Crossbill	2	10

SPECIES	OAKLAND	S.F.
Pine Siskin	200	40
Lesser Goldfinch	401	7
American Goldfinch	298	70
House Sparrow	336	218

RESPLENDENT QUETZAL TOPS 1990 BIRDATHON LIST!

I have a confession to make. We did not see a Resplendent Quetzal on the 1989 Birdathon. Lord knows we tried—it was at the top of our “must see” list and we spent eleven grueling hours on the quest. We came close, though, as close as any of the other teams, except maybe those folks who birded Stanislaus County.

I want you to know that we have not given up. Resplendent Quetzal is at the top of our list for the 1990 Birdathon. And we'll get close this year, too.

You can help. Here, in the order from best to really nice, are some of the things you can do:

- Join us on the quest, by forming your own team for GGAS Birdathon 1990.
- Join one of the other GGAS Birdathon 1990 teams.
- Sign up and pledge \$10 per species seen by the team of your choice.
- Sign up and pledge what you can per species seen by the team of your choice.

Why do people join the quest, you ask? Because, like most of you, they have never seen a Resplendent Quetzal. And because the funds raised (this is a fundraiser, after all) will be used to support National Audubon's efforts to save Mono Lake and GGAS's local conservation and education efforts.

It is not too early to start thinking about your favorite avian orders (Trogoniformes for Quetzals) to be seen on the GGAS Birdathon 1990. The date is

Saturday, April 28. For more details, stay tuned to this space in *The GULL* for April.

—PURPLE MARTIN

SELENIUM V

The Bay Institute through convenor Arnold Schultz has announced a two-day meeting at UC Berkeley March 30 and 31 which continues the symposia initiated in 1983.

The current state of information on selenium in the ecosystem, the history of irrigated agriculture, the social effects of corporate agriculture, the economic effects of continuing irrigated agriculture on troubled lands, tax practices and their effect on agricultural practices, legal aspects of the Kesterson tragedy, and business consequences of governmental actions will be considered.

The Bay Institute can be reached at 331-2303, or by writing to 10 Liberty Ship Way, #120, Sausalito, CA 94965. Registration is \$15, \$21 with one box lunch, \$27 with two box lunches. make checks payable to the Bay Institute.

Agricultural drainage no longer flows into Kesterson, but similar evaporation ponds exist in the southern San Joaquin Valley and more are planned, authorized by the State despite evidence that wildlife is being adversely affected as at Kesterson. Similar evidence is accumulating from other locations in the West, as predicted at Selenium II. There is still no answer to making agricultural drainage "safe" to use as water for wildlife habitat.

National Audubon's WESTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

April 7-10, 1990 is Asilomar time again. Numerous opportunities to participate in small group workshops and discussion sessions focusing on a

variety of topics pertaining to conservation, chapter activities and nature study. In addition to the programs at the conference ground there are an array of field trips. Because it is the spring recess at most schools, programs are offered for the 3-12 year age group.

Make your reservations early as Asilomar is very popular and the conference is filled up early. For housing you can phone (408) 372-8016, ext. 2238 or 2239 or for conference information call (916) 481-5332.

SF STATE BIRDWALK

Join Dennis Beal, Professor of Art and Bernie Goldstein, Professor of Biology, on the Fourth Annual SF State University Campus Birdwalk, Sunday, April 1, 1990. There is much to see and hear on this campus located near Lake Merced. Nesting Cliff Swallows will be making their annual visit to set up housekeeping at the J. Paul Leonard Library. The morning walk around the Campus will be followed by a walk around Lake Merced. Bring lunch and liquids. Meet at the entrance to Parking Lot 7, Tapia Drive, off Font Blvd., 8 A.M. For information phone Harriet Talan, 338-2132.

MARIN BIRDSONG INVITES YOU

Welcome to another four month session (March through June) of field trips devoted to enjoying and learning about the bird sounds of spring and early summer. This year the schedule will include three mid-week trips per month and three week-end trips, including a camping weekend and a backpacking weekend. Schedules will be mailed to you (in stamped self-addressed envelopes which you must supply.)

This year the series is a fund-raiser on behalf of organizations making significant efforts to counter the tragedy

of rainforest destruction. A check for \$50 or \$25 (according to your means or interest) and three stamped, self-addressed envelopes are your entry to as many as you would like to attend of the 24 offerings. make checks payable to one (or a combination of) the following: Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, or Rainforest Action Network. Send your check(s) to Howard Williams, P.O. Box 654, Kentfield, CA 94914. If there are any questions feel free to call anytime between 6:30 a.m. and 8:30 p.m. at 925-2508.

DESERT ECOLOGY

The Tucson Audubon Society has announced an **Institute of Desert Ecology**, at Catalina State Park April 19-22, its 20th annual offering. In the field and in camp focus will be Sonoran Desert ecosystems rather than identification and classification. The intensive daily schedule begins at dawn and ends with owling. The cost is \$245 per person, which includes instruction, camp services, and all meals, beginning with breakfast on Thursday and ending with lunch on Sunday. Arrival is between 4 and 9 p.m. on the 18th. Participants furnish their own tents or campers. Water is available, but there are no water or electrical hook-ups. Generators are not permitted. Ample meals are catered from an on-site unit. Participants are limited to 60, activities are in small groups. Write or phone Mary Ann Chapman, Director, 300 E. University Blvd. #120, Tucson, AZ 85705, (602) 887-9449.

MANITOBA TRIP

The Santa Cruz Bird Club is planning a ten day trip to Southern Manitoba and Churchill from June 16-25, 1990. The trip leader will be Dan Weedon, naturalist at Riding Mountain National Park. Some exciting birds are in pros-

pect: Black-backed and Three-toed Woodpeckers, Redpolls, Bohemian Waxwings, and several sparrow species, Chestnut-collared Longspurs, and more. Last year at Churchill there were Great Gray, Hawk and Boreal Owls to be seen. Cost is \$1,945 for airfare, all accommodations and travel within Manitoba and most meals. Call Earl Lebow at (408) 475-5329 for details.

SEATTLE AUDUBON TRIPS

The chapter in Seattle is offering tours to Mexico, Oregon, Minnesota, Manitoba, throughout Washington, and possibly to Hawaii and Arizona. Information is available by writing SAS Operations Director: Kaethe Barton, 619 Joshua Green Bldg., Seattle WA 98101.

ARIZONA, NEW MEXICO IN SPRING

The Santa Fe NAS Randall Davey Audubon Center is offering river birding trips on the Rio Chama and Salt River and an overland trip in the Gila Wilderness. Write to the Center at P.O. Box 9314, or phone (505) 983-4609 (9-5, Mon-Fri).

Apr. 11-15 Salt River \$550 per person. Chama River **May 11-13** \$200 per person, or May 19 and 20 \$150 per person. **May 26-28** Gila Country overland \$200 per person.

Trips are guided by Audubon educators and knowledgeable birders. River trips are staffed by professional boaters. No previous river experience necessary.

EXCHANGE

The latest publication to ask to be added to our exchange list to receive *The GULL* is *EL HORNERO* published in Buenos Aires by the Asociacion Ornitológica del Plata. English abstracts

are included at the head of most entries, and beginning with Number 1 of Volume 13, it is available for use in the GGAS office.

PUBLISHING PROJECT

The plight of our fragile planet is the proposed subject of a book in the series *A day in the Life*, planned for issuance in the fall of 1990. Members of the environmental community are invited to submit photo assignment ideas, anything that might be appropriate. Of particular interest would be success stories, ways in which individuals, communities and organizations are actively restoring the earth.

Mission Earth will target six major areas: global warming, pollution, overpopulation, land and ocean protection, energy and endangered species. As in previous projects, 50 newspaper and magazine photographers will spread out over four continents to capture current conditions and advances being made to reduce the threats to earth's fragile balance.

Suggestions should be sent to the attention of Kate Kelly, Collins Publishers, 50 Osgood Place, San Francisco, CA 94133.



NEWS FROM THE RANCH

Audubon Canyon Ranch (415) 868-9244
Shoreline Hwy., Stinson Beach, CA 94970
Wildlife Sanctuaries & Centers for Nature
Education under joint sponsorship of Golden Gate,
Madrone, Marin and Dequoia Audubon Societies
Jack Harper, President

The season's first 9 Great Blue Herons arrived at ACR on Wednesday, February 24.

ACR OPENS MARCH 17

It's that time again. ACR opens its trails to the public on March 17. If you haven't been to the Ranch during the early season you've missed something special. It's true you won't see any egret chicks, but you may see the first herons hatch. As for the egrets they should just be setting up shop. Watch their dramatic courtship displays as they form pair bonds and stake out nest sites. Plan to explore one of the longer trails.

Get to the Ranch early so you won't miss the morning moisture on the lush green grasses and shrubs and the coolness of the morning mist. The Stinson Beach Road (Hwy. 1) may still be closed, so if you are coming from the south plan to drive over Mt. Tam.

When you're ready wander upward through the oaks and redwoods to the top of Pitcher Canyon. The wildflowers should peak early this year, so bring your field guide. When you get to the creek stop to enjoy the water striders as they dart over the pool above the cascade. Take the time to listen to the flowing water and the breeze in the trees.

Follow your nose to a bay tree. You will surely see a big, yellow banana slug right on the trail. If you pick it up you'll be surprised how cool it is. You may also get some insight into why nothing seems to eat these morsels while you're trying to get the slime off your hands. It's not so bad, try it with small children, they think it's great. As you continue on the trail around to the south

and west discover the damp coolness of our oldest growth of trees. If you're lucky you may see a Spotted Owl before your walk takes you into the coastal scrub and grasslands which bring You back to the canyon floor.

You may want to spend a little time on the canyon floor, but you really should beat the crowd to the overlook. It's relaxing there, so you can forget the city, work and worries before hitting

the trail. Spend a few moments watching the Turkey Vultures soaring overhead. Maybe the first of the season's swallows will join them. We hope the Golden Eagle won't be with them.

WOOPS!

Last month's announcement in this column indicated ACR's next docent training class will begin during spring. Make that fall.

—DAN MURPHY

GIFTS and BEQUESTS

FOR GGAS

In Memory of

Lucy M. Hurd
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FOR AUDUBON CANYON RANCH

In Memory of

John Morgan Cain Celia S. Cain

The Society welcomes gifts in general or gifts in honor of or in memory of relatives and friends. Such gifts will be used as specified by the donor or, if unspecified, at the discretion of the GGAS Board of Directors. This includes their use for general GGAS activities or for special programs of the Society including Audubon Canyon Ranch of which GGAS is a sponsor. Please send your gift in the form of a check made out to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 1250 Addison St., #107B, Berkeley, CA 94702. All gifts are tax deductible. The Society is also appreciative of any bequests. Such bequests should specify as recipient the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in *The Gull* as well as personally on behalf of the Society by the Secretary.

HOW TO FIND THE MUSEUM

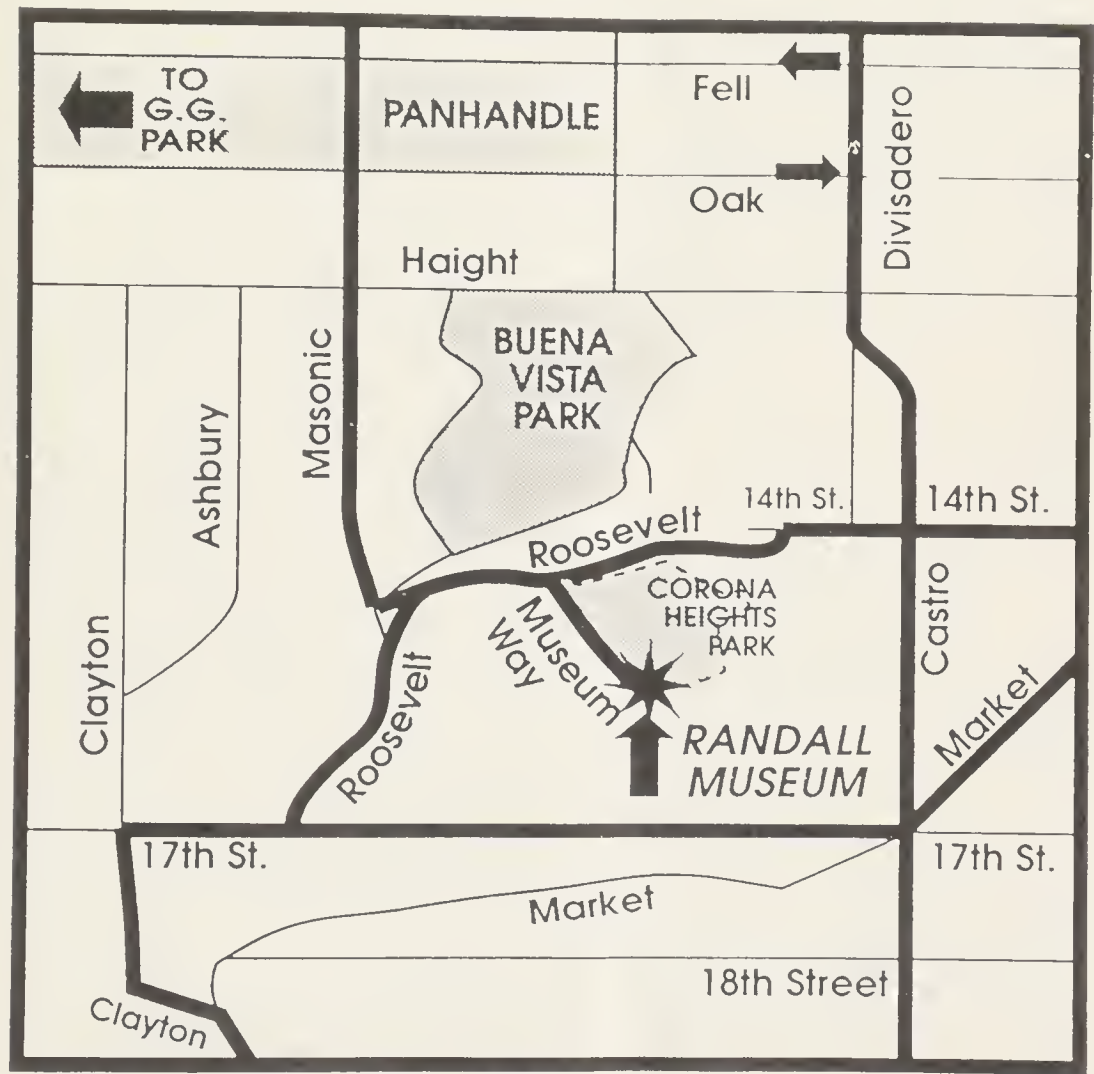
The Josephine Randall Museum is at 199 Museum Way, San Francisco.

From the east: go west on 14th St. across Market, up the hill until 14th St. veers left and becomes Roosevelt Way. Continue one quarter mile, Museum Way is on the left.

From the East Bay: exit the freeway at Fell and turn left at Masonic, then same as for the north.

From the north: go south on Masonic, across the Panhandle, up and over the hill where Masonic merges with Roosevelt Way. One block ahead on the right is Museum Way.

From west and south: take Portola to Upper Market, head downhill, turn left at the signal at Clayton St. Go uphill on Clayton, turn right at the second signal (17th St.) then make the first left onto Roosevelt Way. Continue a quarter mile. Museum Way is on the right.





Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc.
Office: 843-2222
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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA RARE BIRD ALERT (recorded) (415) 528-0288

Update: 524-5592

Mall for all individuals listed above should be sent to GGAS office.

Send address changes to office promptly; Post office does not forward *THE GULL*. Monthly meetings: second Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Joint membership — local and national \$30 per year (individual); \$38 (family); includes *AUDUBON* Magazine and *THE GULL*; to join, make checks payable to National Audubon Society and send to GGAS office to avoid delay in receiving *THE GULL*. Membership renewals should be sent directly to the National Audubon office. Subscriptions to *THE GULL* separately \$10 per year; single issues \$1. High school and college student membership \$18 per year. Senior citizen individual \$21, senior citizen family \$23. Associate Membership in Golden Gate Audubon Society, \$10 per year.

The Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. was established January 25, 1917,
and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948.

The *Gull* deadline is the first of the month for the following month, and July 15th for September issue.